Mr. Rankin

May 7, 1964

MEMORANDUM

To: J. Lee Rankin

From: Howard P. Willens

The attached letter to the FBI was prepared jointly by Messrs. Griffin and Slawson after their recent discussion with you. I do not recommend that the letter be sent in its present form. I do agree that we should secure additional reports from the FBI on these political groups, but I believe that the scope of the attached request is unreasonably broad.

In the first place, the letter comes close to requesting a complete report on the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party in Texas during the period from 1961 through 1963 and in major metropolitan areas, including New York and Chicago, during the year 1963. I do not think that any further over-all reports or summaries on these two political organizations need be requested by this Commission. Our investigation has disclosed that Oswald had certain limited contacts with each of these organizations which we have explored. I would recommend as to these two organizations that we secure reports only from Dallas and Fort Worth during the year 1963.

As to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and the other four Cuba-oriented groups, I think that a broader request may be appropriate and not unduly burdensome. I think that we should request a report regarding each of these groups which would identify the group and discuss its activities during the year 1963. Further limitation of this request to two major metropolitan areas and Texas would probably be well received by the FBI and still elicit the information we need for our investigation.

This leaves for further consideration the scope of our request regarding the Minute Men and the John Birch Society. We have received some material on the Minute Men from the Secret Service. In my own mind, the only purpose of such a request would be to secure sufficient detailed information upon the basis of which we could make a judgment as

to whether either Oswald or Ruby was involved with one of these organizations. If you concur in my estimate of the purpose of the request, I think we should request these reports only for the year 1963 and only with regard to activities of these organizations in the State of Texas. Any conspiratorial activity involving either Oswald or Ruby with one of these groups would be revealed by this information, if at all.

I have discussed this generally with Mr. Griffin and he is prepared to capitulate in almost every regard. I have not done likewise with Mr. Hanes.